The Three Powerful Cities of Russia

**Kiev**- Kiev was Russia’s first major city and served as the foundation that **ALL** of Russia was built upon. Thanks to the beauty and splendor of the **Hagia Sophia**, Vladimir decided to accept Eastern Orthodox Christianity as Russia’s official religion. Before the conversion to Christianity was already connected to the Byzantine Empire through trade and now that Vladimir decided to convert to Christianity, Kiev really began to flourish. To be fair the beauty and splendor of Justinian’s Hagia Sophia was not the only selling point for Vladimir to convert. He also really appreciated the how the head of the Orthodox church was the emperor...and not the pope. Under Vladimir’s son Yaroslav “The Wise”, Kiev was lifted to even greater glory as it became the center of government, education, and religion, housing more than 400 churches. By 1054 major trade in the area was greatly disrupted (not just because of the split, but the crusades and fighting in the Middle East) causing a great decline in the power and glory of the city. In the 13th century the Mongols will completely demolish the city. While the city was rebuilt Moscow will replace Kiev as Russia’s capital city.

**Moscow** – This can be called the city of the Ivan’s. It was first founded in the 12th century, but began as a crude village. By the 14th century Moscow was home to the most powerful Russian prince, “Ivan Moneybag” or Ivan I. Ivan I became a powerful and rich prince by earning the Mongols trust and serving as a tax collector to the Mongols. (Don’t forget this is how the Mongols benevolently ruled their territories you were left alone if you paid your taxes). Ivan III will take Moscow to the next level when he claims Russia for himself (no longer under Mongol rule) and names himself **czar**; which was the Russian version of Caesar. Why? Ivan III wanted to be become the “Third Rome”. The office of czar will not become official until Ivan IV, who was also known as Ivan the Terrible. Moscow will remain the capital of Russia until the 18th century when Peter moves the capital to St. Petersburg.

**St. Petersburg** – This city was founded on the blood and sweat of the Russian people. Peter the Great built this city because he wanted Russia to advance and become a major world power, but before they could do that they had to catch up to the advances already made in the West. In order to do this Peter knew that Russia would need a warm water port that would give them access to the West. After a long hard fought war against the Sweden Peter won his swampy property and began to build his city. St. Petersburg represented the new Russia, the Westernized Russian, and it would become Russia’s new capital. Peter’s combination of reforms and a new capital city with Western access allowed Russia to move away from Feudalism and eventually develop into a world power.

